



## 2026 Iowa Certificate of Need (CON) Application

Instructions: 1. Complete all the sections below. 2. Provide concise, evidence-based responses, with supporting documentation or data as needed. 3. Reference Iowa Code 10A.714, as needed, to complete the application. 4. Upload additional documentation, as needed.

### Primary Contact

Mr. Greg Polzin

### Primary Contact Employer

Belmond Community Hospital

### Primary Contact Email

greg.polzin@iaspecialty.com

### Facility Name

Belmond Community Hospital dba Iowa Specialty Hospital - Belmond

### Facility Address

403 1st Street SE, Belmond, Iowa 50421

### Project Title

Purchase of DaVinci 5 Robotic System and Surgery Suite Renovations Necessary for Service Delivery

### Project Type

New Equipment

### Would you like to request a summary review?

Yes

## 1. Applicant and Facility Overview

### a. Project Purpose and Objectives:

The proposed project is included in Healthy Hometowns. By investing in the da Vinci 5 robotic surgical system, Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond will strengthen rural surgical capacity, reduce rural bypass, improve patient outcomes, and support a sustainable model of care that directly advances the Healthy Hometowns vision of accessible, high-quality healthcare close to home for rural Iowans. Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond is confident in their ability to acquire, implement, and sustain a successful surgical robotics program.

The implementation of the robotic surgical system will reduce the burden the most vulnerable patients experience when looking for care that is timely, close to home, and of the highest quality. Robotic assisted surgery is becoming the standard of care for patients and surgeons are expecting to have this technology available.

### b. Relationship to Long-Range Development Plan:

Within the strategic vision of Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond, robotic surgery plays a key role in continuing to provide state-of-the-art, evidence-based care for the communities it serves. As surgical

medicine evolves, robotics is shifting from an optional tool to a necessary surgical instrument. With this evolution, adaptations to patient's care plans, expectations, and surgeon training become more than a desire but a requirement to provide the highest standard of care. By intentionally incorporating robotics into its strategic plan, Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond has aligned facility renovations, recruitment efforts, and operational planning in preparation for robotic system implementation.

**c. Description of Proposed Service/Program:**

The proposed project is included in Healthy Hometowns. Intuitive Surgical's da Vinci 5 robotic system is their most advanced multiport robotic platform incorporating design innovations and expanded computing power. The system contains three main parts, a console, patient cart, and tower along with a digital learning tool for providers. The da Vinci 5 is designed to enhance surgeon control, precision, visualization, ergonomics, and digital capabilities while streamlining workflow in the operating room. The system delivers high-definition imaging that gives surgeons a magnified, lifelike view of the anatomy. The enhanced imaging supports better depth perception and detail visualization. The technology allows surgeons to sense the force being applied to tissue which can improve safety for delicate tissue handling. The surgeon is able to access key operating room functions directly without leaving the console which promotes greater autonomy, consistency, and efficiency during procedures.

**d. Target Population: Specify geographic and demographic areas.**

Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond's service area for surgical procedures includes Cerro Gordo, Franklin, Hamilton, Hancock, Humboldt, Webster, Winnebago, and Wright counties. After procuring the da Vinci 5 robotic equipment, the service area is expected to increase with the additional services that will be provided. With the capability to complete more complex surgical cases, Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond will complete more procedures within the facility instead of having to refer these patients to a larger medical facility. Because of this, the largest surgical patient increase is expected to be within the current service area.

The main specialties that will use the da Vinci 5 robotic system are general surgery, gynecology, and urology.

**e. Relation to Existing Provider Network: Summarize relationship with other health care providers/services in the region.**

Due to the rural location of Iowa Specialty Hospital - Belmond, we know firsthand how important partnerships are for organizational success. For many years Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond has partnered with larger facilities located in Ames, Des Moines, Mason City and others to provide specialty clinic services patients would otherwise have to drive long distances to obtain.

Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond is part of the University of Iowa (UI) Health Care's Rural Health Collaborative Initiative in which independent rural health care providers and UI are working together to ensure and improve Iowan's access to sustainable health care.

The partnerships with these organizations strengthen Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond's position as a hospital ready to move forward with the addition of a da Vinci 5 robot to better serve our surgical patients. Beyond our current partnerships, Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond continues to encourage and build additional partnerships with other rural facilities in north central Iowa that do not have robot assisted surgery options. Partnerships are ever evolving and our willingness to keep lines of communication open help us continue to improve as a rural healthcare organization.

**f. Funding Sources and Financial Resources: Identify and document sources of funding and financial viability.**

Belmond Community Hospital dba Iowa Specialty Hospital - Belmond has been selected to receive funding through the Best and Brightest – Medical Equipment Procurement grant program for the purchase and installation of a da Vinci 5 robotic system. Belmond Community hospital will fund the remaining portion of

the project not covered by grant funding. The facility has adequate capital to purchase the remaining portion of the project necessary for service delivery and to maintain the program.

**Current # of Beds (if changing)**

**Current bed type (if changing)**

**Requested # of Beds (if changing)**

**Requested bed type (if changing)**

**Document Upload**

## **2. Community Need and Service Gaps**

### **a. Description of Need:**

Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond is a rural acute care hospital located in Belmond, Iowa. The facility is a critical access hospital providing essential healthcare services to Wright County and surrounding rural communities. The facility includes inpatient beds, outpatient services, and a range of clinical offerings such as family medicine, general surgery, obstetrics/gynecology, orthopedics, radiology, emergency care, and specialty services.

The da Vinci 5 robotic system will allow Iowa Specialty Hospital - Belmond to complete more complex surgical cases. Currently these cases must be done as an open procedure (meaning a larger incision area) or the patients must be referred to an outside healthcare facility. When compared to open surgery, da Vinci robotic-assisted surgeries are associated with 75% fewer transfusions and 30% fewer readmissions (Ricciardi, Seshadri-Kreaden, Yankovsky, et al. The COMPARE Study. Ann Surg 2025).

### **b. Assessment of Existing Services and Gaps:**

Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond anticipates serving an increasing number of patients annually with the da Vinci 5 equipment, significantly improving access to high-quality surgical care close to home. An estimated 185 procedures will be completed the first year the da Vinci 5 system is in place. This number was determined from reviewing surgical data including open procedures completed in the facility, patients requiring transfer, and patients referred to other facilities. The state-of-the-art equipment will be used on all patient populations including older adults, low-income patients who face challenges when it comes to accessing care, and other vulnerable groups.

Another advantage of this project includes the ability to recruit and retain skilled surgeons. Having the ability to use advanced technology when caring for patients is highly important to surgeons when deciding where to practice. This investment shows the commitment to excellence and innovation and is instrumental for improved patient outcomes.

### **c. Alternatives Analysis:**

Without the addition of robotic assisted surgery, we continue to provide laparoscopic and open surgical options. For the cases that need higher surgical care we would continue to refer patients outside our system to have their procedures completed.

Robotic surgery is being taught during medical residency programs making it an important piece of equipment as we continue to recruit to our area. Surgeons are trained on robot assisted surgeries and learning about the positive patient outcomes. Robotic surgery has also become more widely known by patients over the last several years. Because of the benefits associated with robotic surgery, we are continuing to see more and more patients wanting robotic surgery as an option for the latest surgical care. Keeping surgeries local helps rural hospitals retain revenue and sustain services, which in turn supports other essential healthcare and community services.

### **d. Accessibility Considerations:**

Iowa Specialty Hospital - Belmond will be installing the da Vinci 5 robotic system to provide the best patient and provider outcomes. The closest rural facilities with this newest technology are Decorah (125 miles northeast), Orange City (148 miles east), and Le Mars (150 miles west).

This advanced surgical care initiative supports Our Purpose: To be the best place for employees to work, providers to practice, and patients to receive care and Our Strategy: Consistently exceed your expectations.

**e. Community Input/Support:**

We anticipate strong support for the da Vinci 5 system based on our organization's history of expanding access to services to meet the needs of the rural population we serve. Although no formal community meetings or surveys have been conducted to date, specifically related to robotic surgery, we are committed to engage all internal and external stakeholders in order to make the project a success.

**Document Upload (if needed)**

**f. Non-discriminatory Access:**

The robotic-assisted surgery program will be offered without discrimination to all patients regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability status, or socioeconomic background. All patients will have equitable access to these procedures based on medical necessity and provider recommendation.

### **3. Impact on Existing Providers**

**a. Impact Assessment:**

The closest facility/provider offering similar services is approximately 40 miles. There is unlikely to be a significant impact on operations at outside facilities.

**b. Community and Economic Impact: Broader system effect and value-added to the community.**

Now is the right time for Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond to add the da Vinci 5 system because it represents a generational leap in surgical technology that aligns with current clinical demand, surgeon workforce needs, operational efficiency goals, and long-term financial sustainability. Investing in this technology now positions the organization ahead of market expectations, strengthens recruitment and retention, and reduces patient outmigration. Iowa Specialty Hospital strives to bring services close to home for our rural residents. This decreases travel burden, wait times, and fragmented care.

**c. Efficiency in Use of Resources: Shared/cooperative arrangements to maximize efficiency.**

The da Vinci 5 system will be located in one of our surgical suites and accessible to multiple specialties including general surgery, gynecology, and urology.

### **4. Financial and Operational Feasibility**

**a. Financial Projections and Feasibility:**

The technology will be purchased and supported with the award of the Best and Brightest – Medical Equipment Procurement grant and existing capital. The specialties that will have the most utilization will be general surgery, urology, and gynecology. The cost of the da Vinci 5 system is approximately \$2,536,000. In addition, there will be renovations to the surgical suite including HVAC of approximately \$2,150,000. Ongoing annual expenses to support the surgical equipment is approximately \$265,000 after the first year of warranty.

**Document Upload (3-year budget projections)**

Financial Projections.xlsx

**b. Staffing and Operations:**

Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond currently has five providers trained on robotic assisted surgery including three general surgeons, one urologist, and one gynecologist. These specialists have used robots during medical school or at other facilities and look forward to having this technology available in Belmond. As these providers are currently using this technology in other facilities, we are confident in their ability to transition from open surgery to robotic surgery at Iowa Specialty Hospital - Belmond.

For robotic assisted surgeries to be completed there is a team required for each surgery including the surgeon, advanced practice provider or RN to change out instruments, circulator nurse, scrub technicians, and perioperative nursing. The current operating room staff is adequate to proceed with this project. These employees will schedule, staff, and coordinate the robotic surgeries using established processes and protocols. The da Vinci 5 will be integrated into the existing surgical service line requiring no immediate additional staff needs.

Intuitive Surgical will be onsite to complete the install of the da Vinci 5 system and will provide education and training opportunities for providers and the surgical care team. The formalized training is tailored to each team members' role and involves overall knowledge of the equipment, cleaning procedures, electrical needs, troubleshooting processes, safety measures, and service needs.

**c. Short and Long-term Viability:**

This program will be supported by existing staff. Maintenance of the current workforce will ensure this program is properly supported. Adequate capital and financial resources exist to support the procurement and maintenance of this technology.

## **5. Community and Economic Impact**

**a. Community Engagement:**

The addition of the robotic assisted surgery program will reduce the need for our local patients to travel long distances to their surgical needs. This will increase local access to high-quality, minimally invasive procedures for all patients served.

**b. Resource Availability:**

This program will be supported by existing staff and management. The da Vinci 5 will be integrated into the existing surgical service line requiring no immediate additional staff needs.

**c. Organizational Relationships:**

The DaVinci 5 robotic surgery program will be integrated with our ancillary and support services. These include radiology (imaging), anesthesia, sterile processing, nursing, postoperative care, to name a few. These services are already in place to support the success of the project.

Although no formal arrangements are in place with medical schools or HMOs pertaining to the surgical robot, we continue to maintain relationships with the University of Iowa as well as specialty providers. In addition, we are constantly collaborating with other entities. The surgical robot is intended to continue to sustain our already robust surgical service line and provide growth opportunities and potential integration into regional care strategies.

## **6. Project Planning**

**a. Project Timeline:**

March 2026: Send Certificate of Need application to Iowa Health and Human Services (HHS)

Upon CON Approval: Approval of contract by hospital board and award of remodel contract

Spring 2026: Remodel starts

Late Spring 2026: Sign purchase agreement for da Vinci 5 system with Intuitive Surgical to allow for lead time

Summer 2026: Remodel substantial completion

Summer 2026: Installation of da Vinci 5 system and staff training

August 2026: Anticipated first surgery will be completed

#### **b. Innovative Components:**

Implementing robotic assisted surgery is expected to reduce length of stay and surgical complications while also increasing recruitment and retention of providers through the enhanced innovation provided by the da Vinci 5 system (Intuitive, 2025). The My Intuitive component of this system is an important and innovative piece of the system. It has a built-in digital tool that allows surgeons to collaborate in real time. Data is captured to help understand surgical performance, create personalized training, and bridge the gap between distance and connection. This is ideal for surgeons located in rural areas that often do not have additional training resources. The Force Feedback technology allows surgeons to sense the force being applied to tissues. This can reduce tissue trauma from inadvertent force from the surgical instruments on delicate tissues.

#### **c. Regulatory Compliance:**

Mandatory approvals and requirements will be completed at scheduled times throughout the project. These include the bidding process for remodel, board approval for awarding the remodel contracts, board approval for the da Vinci 5 robot purchase, and approval by HHS through the Certificate of Need process. Upon completion of the remodel, fire marshal and occupancy requirements will be completed. In addition, surgical care team training and competency models will be required prior to the first patient procedures being completed.

## **7. Special Criteria for Specific Services:**

#### **a. Alternative Consideration (10A.714(2)(a)):**

If Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond did not move forward with this project, patients would be required to continue to travel further for advanced surgical treatment.

#### **b. Utilization of Similar Facilities (10A.714(2)(b)):**

Without the ability to complete more complex surgical cases, patients must be referred elsewhere to receive the surgical treatment they need. The closest facilities providing robot-assisted surgery are Mason City (40 miles northeast), Fort Dodge (54 miles southwest), or Ames (60 miles south). Iowa Specialty Hospital - Belmond will be installing the da Vinci 5 robotic system to provide the best patient and provider outcomes. The closest rural facilities with this newest technology are Decorah (125 miles northeast), Orange City (148 miles east), and Le Mars (150 miles west).

Completion of this project will increase the surgical procedures that can be completed in Wright County while also improving patient outcomes and reducing travel for patients.

#### **c. Construction/Modernization (10A.714(2)(c)):**

Now is the right time for Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond to add the da Vinci 5 system because it represents a generational leap in surgical technology that aligns with current clinical demand, surgeon workforce needs, operational efficiency goals, and long-term financial sustainability. Investing in this technology now positions the organization ahead of market expectations, strengthens recruitment and retention, reduces patient outmigration, and ensures our robotic surgery platform remains relevant and expandable for the next decade.

**d. Access Concerns (10A.714(2)(d)):**

Rural residents in north-central Iowa experience barriers to accessing specialty surgical care including travel distance, workforce shortages, and delayed intervention. A medical desert is defined as a lack of access to health services a patient needs or would substantially benefit from. Due to rural communities having less access to a robot to assist with surgical procedures, minimally invasive surgery deserts exist in rural hospitals (Brinzac, Kuhlmann, Dussault, Ungureanu, Chereches, Baba. Defining medical deserts – an international consensus-building exercise, 2023). With surgical staff in place, surgeons trained on robotic assisted surgery, and the ability to acquire a da Vinci 5 system, Iowa Specialty Hospital – Belmond will help close this service gap.

**e. UIHC Special Role (10A.714(3)):**

N/A

**Signature**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Polzin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Additional Supporting Documents Upload**